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FM AMEMBASSY VATICAN

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0442

INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

RUCNISL/ISLAMIC COLLECTIVE

RUEHROV/AMEMBASSY VATICAN 0470

C O N F I D E N T I A L VATICAN 000167

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 8/10/2016

TAGS: PREL PHUM VT LE

SUBJECT: LEBANON: HOLY SEE SEEKS HELP FOR VILLAGE

REF: (a) VATICAN 162 AND PREVIOUS (b) State 128442 (c) State 130145

CLASSIFIED BY: Christopher Sandrolini, Charge d'affaires a.i.,
EXEC, State.

REASON: 1.4 (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. Holy See Acting FM asked Charge d'affaires to convey Holy See concern for the Lebanese village of Rmeich, and during ensuing discussion reiterated Holy See views that only through negotiations -- not through military force -- could a solution be found to the crisis in Lebanon. Charge pressed USG views and urged the Holy See to be more vocal in supporting Israel's right to self-defense and in condemning Hizbollah's terrorist acts. Charge also raised a press report alleging that Hizbollah's Rome point of contact is the Iranian embassy to the Holy See. End summary.

¶2. (C) Holy See Acting FM Parolin called in Charge d'affaires August 10 to talk about Lebanon. Parolin handed charge a diplomatic note marked "Urgent" concerning the plight of the village of Rmeich (as written in Italian; phonetically would be something like "Rameyik"). Text of note follows in para 7.

¶3. (C) Parolin appreciated points which charge had provided earlier in the week (ref b). Charge noted the fluidity of the situation and stressed the intense USG effort to reach a workable solution as soon as possible, one which would lead to a lasting peace and an Israeli withdrawal by first ensuring the deployment of a robust international force to prevent a breakdown of any cease-fire -- and thus avoid a return to the unacceptable status quo ante. Parolin said he understood the complexity of the situation but felt that the Lebanese decision to commit 15,000 troops was a significant step. Charge responded that the USG fully appreciated that decision, the Lebanese forces would need international support in order to succeed.

¶4. (C) Parolin said he had been in contact with the Israeli ambassador, the ICRC, and the Apostolic Delegate in Jerusalem as well as the nuncio in Beirut to pursue the Holy See's intense humanitarian concerns about the situation in Lebanon. He asked whether the enormous numbers of internally displaced people in Lebanon would be able to return to their homes if the Israeli Defense Force remained in the same area. Parolin expressed the Holy See's fears of a possible civil war in Lebanon. The only possible solution must be political, not military; and violence is preventing the political process from working. Parolin hoped the USG would remain in close contact with the Holy See.

¶5. (C) Charge urged the Holy See to include, in its public statements on Lebanon, important points made by the Vatican at the outset of the crisis but not since -- specifically defending Israel's right to exist and defend itself and condemning the terrorist actions of Hizbollah. Charge also pointed out to Parolin a press report (in the Italian daily Il Giornale) alleging that Hizbollah's point of contact in Rome was the Iranian embassy to the Holy See. It hardly needed pointing out, said charge, that no embassy to the Holy See had any business

working with a terrorist organization in Lebanon. Parolin was surprised and concerned by the press report and promised to look into it.

¶6. (SBU). Charge also shared points (ref c) on the proposed UN Human Rights Council Special Session on Lebanon, emphasizing our view that the proposal should be actively opposed. Parolin appreciated the information and appeared to agree fully. (Note: the Holy See has only an observer's role on the council. End note.)

¶7. (U) Post informal translation of diplomatic note:

In the village of Rmeich, in the south of Lebanon, there are still six thousand people without water, without food, and without fuel (for small electric generators and for pumps) and, of these, many are children. These people include many from the surrounding villages, and belong to all Lebanese religious confessions. Can we not find a way to provide them with water, powdered milk, and bread?

If the proposed corridor available to the Red Cross or to Caritas in Lebanon is not possible, perhaps the International Red Cross could have access to the village from the southern front (from Israel): the convoy could be thus checked in every detail.

This is a strictly humanitarian and truly dramatic matter.
End informal translation.

SANDROLINI